



Rural

Desert

Character

### **Desert Foothills - Rural Desert Character**

Through an extensive citizen participation process, the residents and property owners of the Desert Foothills area have consistently stated their desire to be “caretakers” of the Sonoran desert and maintain a Rural Desert character in the Desert Foothills area. The lush upper Sonoran desert vegetation and the rural lifestyle already existing in the area are key elements which have attracted many of the residents and property owners to this unique region of the city. Maintaining undisturbed desert open space while balancing the qualities of the rural lifestyle is crucial to achieving this Rural Desert character.

Defining “rural” can be quite subjective, in part this may be a result of the independent and diverse lifestyles of individuals living in and owning land in these rural areas. One common thread does exist which binds these diverse lifestyles together, the preservation and continuity of desert open space. The Palo Verde-Saguaro plant community, one of the most scenic and lush plant communities in the Sonoran



*Scenery looking east from Lone Mountain & Scottsdale Roads*

desert, can be found throughout the majority of the study area. The dominance and continuity of the Sonoran desert in concert with the diverse and open pattern of homes are the predominant elements that help define the Rural Desert character in the Desert Foothills area.

Maintaining both functional and visual linkages through connecting undisturbed desert open space is a key component in achieving the Rural Desert vision. Functional linkages exist through shared-use trails that provide access to a multitude of non-motorized user groups. These linkages would connect local neighborhoods to a regional shared-use trail system and other designations such as desert preserves, vista corridors and other jurisdictions. Visual linkages provide important vista and scenic corridors that help to preserve the sense of openness experienced in rural areas. These linkages also provide important migration, feeding and habitat for the indigenous wildlife.

Equestrian activity is one of the dominant lifestyles found within the Desert Foothills area. The area is comprised of a variety of equestrian facilities, both in residential and commercial scales. The sensitive integration of these facilities into the natural desert setting and adjacent neighborhoods are



crucial in maintaining the visual dominance of the Sonoran desert.

The study area is predominantly comprised of low residential densities, typically one home for each one to five acres.

Residents currently living in the Desert Foothills area are generally willing to travel longer distances for services and employment. This remote lifestyle is what attracted many of the residents and property owners to this region of the city. However, this lifestyle must be balanced with air quality issues, infrastructure requirements and sustainable development patterns which are important to the future of the valley. Given these important considerations there needs to be an overall balance within the city where basic services can be provided close to residential areas in order to reduce travel distances and to provide a better sense of community.

The delicate balance between one's lifestyle and the fragile Sonoran desert is the underlining theme that defines Rural Desert character in this area. At the present time, Desert Foothills is approximately one-third developed. In the future, there will be other property owners who will one day decide to develop on their property. Blending this future development into the sensitive Sonoran desert context is crucial to achieving the Rural Desert vision for the study area.